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OO RUEHBZ RUEHDU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0673 2211217

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3270

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2205

RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2324

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0856

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1601

RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1959

RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2380

RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4811

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1473

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS HARARE 000673

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR G. GARLAND

ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS

STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM KDEM ZI

SUBJECT: LITTLE EVIDENCE OF AGRICULTURAL CHEMICAL USE ON
POLITICAL VICTIMS

REF: HARARE 652

¶1. (SBU) Despite media reports that the pesticide paraquat has been used by ZANU-PF militia on political victims, there is no scientific evidence to substantiate the claims. Paraquat, an herbicide used on tobacco plantations in Zimbabwe, has reportedly been used in two ways: forced ingestion or on the skin, particularly in beatings.

¶2. (SBU) In a briefing with diplomats on July 22, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Social Welfare Secretary, Kerry Kay said that they believed there had been 30 incidents involving beatings with sticks soaked in paraquat. There are other reports of MDC supporters being forced to ingest paraquat or other poisons. But Dr. Frances Lovemore, the Counseling Services Unit (CSU) director, told diplomats on August 5 that there is no way to corroborate these allegations. Zimbabwe does not have the equipment to perform the necessary toxicology tests. She also noted that paraquat is expensive, not easily obtainable, and not widely used in rural areas. While it is possible that agricultural chemicals have been used in torture cases, she said it is unlikely to have occurred on a large scale. Dr. Lovemore's opinion substantiates the assessment by Dr. Douglas Gwatidzo, director of Zimbabwe Doctors for Human Rights, in a conversation with poloff in early July.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: Reports of agricultural chemicals to poison or torture political victims are disturbing. While they may have been used in isolated cases, usage in cases of political violence does not appear to have been widespread or systematic. END COMMENT.

MCGEE